ART EXHIBITION CATALOGUES REPUBLISHED ON MICROFICHE

Published on microfiche by:

Chadwyck-Healey Ltd
21 Bateman Street
Cambridge CB2 1NB
England

Somerset House
417 Maitland Avenue
Teaneck, NJ 07666
USA

Date of publication and production of master: 1976

Series: The purposes of this series is to make available those catalogues that have lasting interest through their text or their illustrations. Catalogues and cumulations of titles in the series are available from the publishers.

Serial numbers: Each title is identified by a seven-figure serial number placed in the top right hand corner of the microfiche title strip. The first figure indicates the number of the list in which the title first appears. The first three-figure group signifies the gallery or museum; the second three-figure group the accession number for that title.

Copyright: Filmed by permission of the copyright holders. The microfiche edition is the copyright of Chadwyck-Healey Ltd, 1976.

Location of original: The National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Technical data:

Producing laboratory: Micromedia Ltd, Kidlington, Oxford, England.

Note:

Some text and illustrations are lost through tight binding. This is a problem which we regret we have found unavoidable since we are only filming at the Victoria and Albert Museum those catalogues that cannot be found in other London locations.

MARC
CHAGALL

SCULPTURE · CERAMICS
ETCHINGS FOR THE FABLES
OF LA FONTAINE

November 18
December 13
1952

CURT VALENTIN GALLERY
32 EAST 57 STREET · NEW YORK 22

[13]

ANECDOTE AND FANTASY

There is nothing anecdotal in my pictures — no fairy tales — no literature in the sense of folk-legend associations. Maurice Denis described the paintings of the synthetists in France about 1899 as plane surfaces "covered with colors arranged in a certain order." To the cubists a painting was a plane surface covered with form-elements in a certain order. For me a picture is a plane surface covered with representations of objects — beasts, birds, or humans — in a certain order in which anecdotal illustra-

tional logic has no importance. The visual effectiveness of the painted composition comes first. Every extra-structural consideration is secondary.

I am against the terms "fantasy" and "symbolism" in themselves. All our interior world is reality—and that perhaps more so than our apparent world. To call everything that appears illogical, "fantasy," fairy tale, or chimera would be practically to admit not understanding nature.

Impressionism and cubism were relatively easy to understand, because they only proposed a single aspect of an object to our consideration—its relations of light and shade, or its geometrical relationships. But one aspect of an object is not enough to constitute the entire subject-matter of art. An object's aspects are multifarious.

I am not a reactionary from cubism. I have admired the great cubists

[1]

[2]

[12]

and have profited from cubism . . . [But] to me cubism seemed to limit pictorial expression unduly. To persist in that I felt was to impoverish one's vocabulary. If the employment of forms not as bare of associations as those the cubists used was to produce "literary painting," I was ready to accept the blame for doing so.

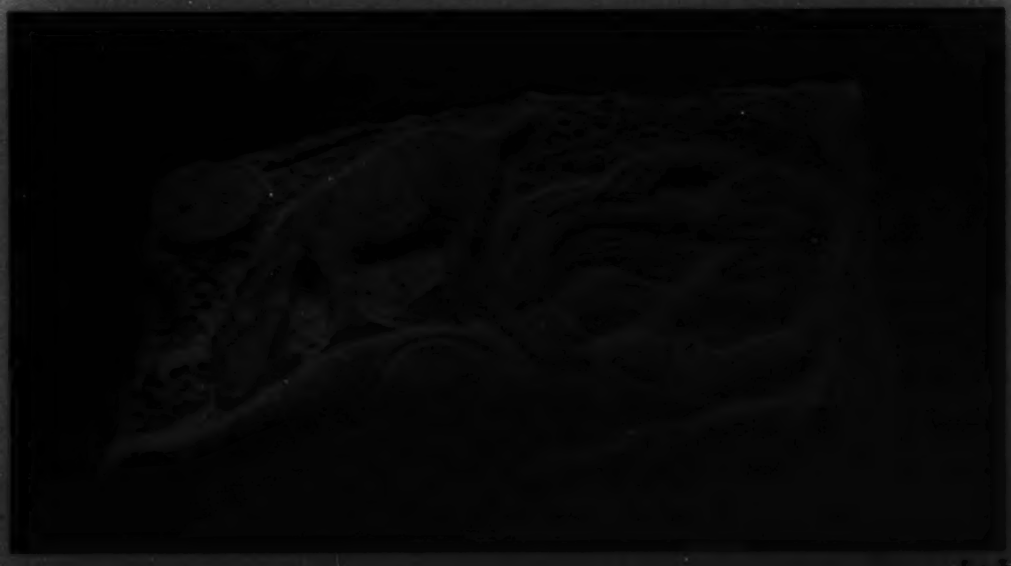
PLASTIC VALUES AND POETIC VALUES

In painting, the images of a woman or of a cow have different values of plasticity—but not different poetic values. As far as literature goes, I feel myself more "abstract" than Mondrian or Kandinsky in my use of pictorial elements. "Abstract" not in the sense that my painting does not recall reality. Such abstract painting in my opinion is more ornamental and decorative, and always restricted in range. What I mean by "abstract" is

something which comes to life spontaneously through a gamut of contrasts, plastic at the same time as psychic, and pervades both the picture and the eye of the spectator with conceptions of new and unfamiliar elements . . .

The fact that I made use of cows, milkmaids, roosters, and provincial Russian architecture as my source forms is because they are part of the environment from which I spring and which undoubtedly left the deepest impression on my visual memory of any experiences I have known. Every painter is born somewhere. And even though he may later return to the influences of other atmospheres, a certain essence—a certain "aroma"—of his birthplace clings to his work. But do not misunderstand me: the important thing here is not "subject" in the sense pictorial "subjects" were painted by the old academicians. The vital mark these early influences leave is, as it were, on the handwriting of the artist.

From *Marc Chagall*
A recorded interview. New York, 1944
[Published in Artists on Art, Pantheon Books, 1945]



VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM LIBRARY

CERAMICS

These few pieces, these few samples of ceramics are a sort of foretaste: the result of my life in the south of France, where one feels so strongly the significance of this craft. The very earth on which I walk is so luminous. It looks at me tenderly, as if it were calling me. I have wanted to use this earth like the old artisans, and to avoid accidental decoration by staying within the limits of ceramics, breathing into it the echo of an art which is near, and at the same time distant. It suddenly seems to me that this earth, so radiant, is calling from afar to the deaf earth of the city where I was born—Vitebsk.

But this earth, just as the craft of ceramics, does not give itself easily. The fire returns my efforts at the oven door sometimes gratifyingly, some-

[23]

[24]

[25]

[26]

times in a grotesque and ridiculous form. The fire and the earth remind me only too well that my means are modest.

Marvelous examples of this occidental and oriental art often occur to me. During these threatening times, one is especially eager to attach himself to this earth, to mingle with it.

Whether I am speaking of ceramics, of engraving, of sculpture, or of painting, all my words are centered on the material, which, because of its very characteristics, is abstraction, provided it maintains a certain aloofness. But even if this material were imbued with an excessive sensitivity, is it not better to devote oneself to this, rather than to be lost in a world where automatism and prideful insensitivity prevail?

Marc Chagall

Vence, September, 1952

[♥]

[♥]

[redacted]

[redacted]

The Two Goats

The Cobbler and the Businessman

THE FABLES OF LA FONTAINE

It is constantly repeated that the fables of La Fontaine are condensed dramas; it is recalled that the fabulist was an observer who moved around a good deal and who heard all the stories in the world. Throughout his work, he tells what he has seen. But here is the inverse: Marc Chagall sees what people tell him. Or, to state it better, he sees immediately what one was about to tell him. He is creative vision. He is turbulent painting. Thus he reveals to us lights which are at the same time profound and mobile. By placing clarities where they should be, he tells a story.

By what admirable gift of synthesis, in his etchings, has he been able to condense still further the fabulist's fables, already so condensed? It is because, with certainty and happiness, he has surprised the *dominant moment* of the story. Take a good look at one of his etchings, and the etching, all by itself, will start to tell a story. Chagall knew how to seize

on the very *germ* of the fable. Thus, in front of one's eyes, the whole thing will germinate, grow, flower. The fable will come out of the image. For example, you know everything when the painter shows you the two silly goats, horn against horn, on the narrow plank which serves as a bridge above the abyss. If you no longer remember the fable, look closely at the picture, and it will give you the moral of the story. By making you see, Chagall makes you speak. Prolong your pleasure in seeing the two heads confronting each other and you will find rhymes. Painting of genius will force you to be a poet of talent.

Sometimes it is more difficult to illustrate the comedy. But the eye of Chagall reads at the bottom of the heart. Take a look at the page where the cobbler will tell you, with finality, about the misfortunes of a rich man. Personally, I can hear this Grégoire laughing! I can hear him laughing with the very laughter of Chagall, with full-throated laughter, containing all the ardor of being alive. Never, before Chagall's etching, did the cobbler Grégoire work so hard on shoes, or twist his head so vigorously as he pulls the thread through. Can't you guess why? It is because Chagall, swift Chagall, has caught the workman in his *final* gaiety, in a gaiety that he had never experienced before, in this *supergaiety* which deliverance brings, *after* he has returned the treasure and not *before* receiving it: cares be damned! The rooster can sing.

Gaston Bachelard
Published in Derrière le Miroir,
A Maeght, Paris, 1952

THE FOX AND THE CROW

FROM A NEW ENGLISH VERSION BY MARIANNE MOORE

On his airy perch among the branches,
Master Crow held some cheese in his beak.
Master Fox, whose pose suggested fragrances,
Said in language which of course I can not speak,
"Aha, superb Sir Ebony, well met.
How black! Who else boasts your metallic jet!
If your warbling were unique,
Rest assured, as you are sleek,
One would say that our wood had hatched nightingales."
All aglow, Master Crow tried to run a few scales,
Risking trills and intervals,
Dropping the prize as his huge beak sang false—
Pounced upon by the fox who remarked, "My dear sir,
Remember; a flatterer
Is glad to live at the listener's cost—
Advice worth far more than the cheese-morsel lost."
The tardy learner, smarting under ridicule,
Swore he'd learned his last lesson as somebody's fool.

From
The Fables of La Fontaine

To be published by The Viking Press in 1953.
Copyright 1952 by Marianne Moore

Cat into Lady

The Fox and the Crow

CATALOGUE

[11]

SCULPTURE 1951-1952

LIMESTONE

[1] *David*
Height 21"

[2] *Lovers*
H. 22½"

[3] *Crucifixion*
H. 21½"

[4] *Moses*
H. 22"

MARBLE

[5] *Nude and Rooster*
9¾ x 10⅝"

[6] *Two Nudes with Goat*
H. 15⅜"

[7] *Nude and Fish*
H. 10½"

[8] *Nude*
H. 8⅛"

[9] *Couple with Goat*
H. 8⅝"

[10] *Boy with Goat*
6⅛ x 8⅛"

[11] *Lovers*
H. 12⅜"

[12] *Descent from the Cross*
H. 10⅝"

CERAMICS 1950-1952

[13] *The Village*
48 x 52"

[14] *Fish*
23 x 34⅜"

[15] *The Couple*
53⅛ x 36"

[16] *The Pendulum*
46 x 34⅝"

[17] *Descent from the Cross*
13 x 11"

[18] *Flowers*
12⅛ x 10⅝"

[19] *Still Life with Fish*
10⅝ x 11⅝"

[20] *Flight into Egypt*
12⅝ x 12⅛"

[21] *Goat and Rooster*
16 x 10⅝"

[22] *Lovers and Rooster*
12 x 8⅛"

[23] *Vase*
H. 13⅜"

[24] *Vase*
H. 13"

[25] *Bird and Flowers*
10⅝ x 9"

[26] *Head of a Goat*
10⅝ x 9"

ETCHINGS 1927-1930

[27*] *One Hundred Etchings for the Fables of La Fontaine*
(Format of the plates 11⅜ x 9⅝")

*The illustrations for the Fables of La Fontaine were commissioned by Ambroise Vollard in 1927 and engraved on copper plates by Marc Chagall in 1927-1930. The book was published by Tériade in Paris in two volumes in 1952 in a limited edition of 200 copies.

LIBRARY